

Telecommunications Service Quality Regulations

Note

This fact sheet offers a basic overview and partial summary of new state regulations that took effect in February 2003. The complete rules are detailed in the Indiana Administrative Code (170 IAC 7-1.2 and 170 IAC 7-1.3) and can be read online at www.IN.gov/legislative.

The rules apply only to local telephone service providers, and only to services provided to residential and small business consumers with fewer than four access lines. The rules do not apply to cellular phone companies, which operate in a competitive market and are subject to little state regulation. Some of the rules do not apply to competitive local exchange carriers that serve fewer than 5,000 consumers.

Landline telephone service is in a transitional phase toward full deregulation by July 2009. Under certain circumstances between now and then, regulations may still require landline service carriers to provide billing credits for delays in establishing new service connections and for long service outages. Regulations may also require some local landline providers to continue answering customer service calls within specific timeframes. These rules do not apply to wireless providers because of the competitive nature of their services.

For Indiana residential and small business customers that only purchase stand-alone basic telecommunications service (BTS), local telephone service providers must still comply with state service quality regulations at least until July 1, 2009, when BTS service quality will also be deregulated.

Bill credits for delays in new service connection

If new local phone service is not installed within five business days of your request, you should receive a bill credit equal to 20 percent of the installation charge for each of the next five business days without service. After 10 business days, the phone company must provide alternate service, such as a cell phone, free of charge.

Bill credits for long service outages

If your reported local service outage is not corrected within 24 hours of the time you report it, you should receive a bill credit equal to 33 percent of the recurring monthly service charge. You should receive an additional 33 percent credit for each additional 24-hour period without service.

Service appointment "windows"

Local phone service utilities must provide you with a four-hour appointment "window" for service installations or repairs if you must be present.

- If the company cannot keep the appointment, it must notify you by 6 p.m. the preceding day.
- If the company fails to keep a repair appointment and does not provide the required notification, it must give you a \$50 bill credit.
- If the company fails to keep an installation appointment and does not provide the required notification, it must give you a \$25 bill credit.

Timeframes during which local phone providers must answer consumer calls (during regular business hours)

- Calls to a provider's repair center or business office must be answered in 60 seconds or less, on average.
- Calls to directory assistance or local service operators must be answered in 20 seconds or less, on average.
- Less than 10 percent of calls to the above services, on average, should get a busy signal or be disconnected.

Consumers are encouraged to contact the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) with any telecommunications concerns (toll-free at 1-800-851-4268 or online at www.in.gov/iurc). The IURC cannot resolve individual telecom complaints but is gathering and tracking data regarding telecommunications services. This information will be included in future reports to the Indiana General Assembly and may also be reported to other appropriate entities.

The IURC's tracking efforts may help identify trends and problems for legislators to consider when reviewing Indiana's telecommunications laws in the future. The OUCC encourages consumers to contact the IURC with telecommunications concerns to help ensure the most accurate tracking and reporting possible.



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